

**Ortley Beach Voters and Taxpayers Association**  
**General Membership Meeting**  
**Sept. 21, 2019**  
**9:30 a.m.**

**The Moose Club, 1801 Bay Blvd., Ortley Beach, NJ**

Meeting called to order at 9:30 a.m.

**Roll call:** Anthony Colucci, Paul Jeffrey, Cathy Crisafulli, Joan Strathern, Toni Tomarazzo, Joseph Cantalupo, Mike Wymbs, and Mary Ann Giordano Wallis present. Quorum established.

**Minutes** of the August 2019 General Members Meeting minutes accepted.

**Treasurer's and Membership reports** – Steve Sherrill

See attached, August 30 report and Beach Jam summary

Steve said he performed a five-year lookback on Beach Jam. Overall the association has broken even. The objective is not to make money on it. Kudos to people who obtained sponsors and to Rick Jurgens, for organizing it (applause).

New memberships came in today, but there has been a 3% decline in membership over last year – down 11 families. Expect to be down 5-6% over last year. Expect 9-10% attrition each year, but this year new memberships fell short.

Paul noted that young families are not joining. We have ramped up social media and are hoping that helps bring them in.

Reports accepted (Mike, Cathy seconded).

Anthony thanked Paul for getting sponsorships for Beach Jam, Joan for selling towels, and for the board's work on Beach Jam.

Paul noted that Beach Jam drew \$12,000 in contributions from local businesses. Dakan and Tim O'Shea were the biggest contributors, funding the fireworks, and they have already said they will support them next year, but bigger. He urged members to support local businesses.

**Guests:**

**Cheryl McCurry, Reclam the Bay:**

Introduced by Paul: He and Anthony are taking a Rutgers extension course on Coastal Stewardship. Cheryl is the captain of the clam upweller tank near Island Beach State Park. Noted that if the bay doesn't stay healthy, we are in trouble because the bay is so important to our existence here.

Cheryl said Reclam the Bay was started in 2005. It is a nonprofit whose work requires a research permit from state DEP and the state Bureau of Marine Management. 1 million clams and ½ million oysters are planted in Barnegat Bay every year.

She then provided an explanation of the importance of clams and oysters to the health of the bay, the methods of implanting them, the need to protect them from natural predators like the nobbed welk (the state shell of NJ). She said the same breed of clams populates Barnegat Bay – they are all just different sizes when harvested so have different names (cherry clams, etc.). Bay scallops grow in the eel grass, which is why the eel grass is so important to the bay's health. Barnegat Bay also has 12 to 13 commercial oyster farmers who populate and harvest.

Cheryl said the Rutgers extension course is 14 weeks. It can be done online or at the coop. extension. Reclam the Bay is looking for volunteers: upweller maintenance, fundraising, fairs and

festivals, schools. The course also emphasizes the importance of living shorelines and the methods to reduce erosions. They are working with several towns that applied for grants for shoreline preservation projects.

**Council Member Maria Maruca:**

Maria praised the OBVTA board for being extremely active.

She noted that there are a few areas of **dune grass**, near the crest, that the Army Corps of Engineers is replacing, as it did not “take.” Might have been the result of the sand in those areas. They will be taking out the sand, mitigating the problem, and then replacing the grass. Eventually, dune grass replenishment will be the responsibility of the township.

**Streetscape update:** It has been an arduous process to get the state DOT to sign off on hiring the designer, NV5. The work can’t start until the state signs off.

**6<sup>th</sup> Terrace street elevation:** There will be another meeting on Oct. 11<sup>th</sup> at 3 p.m. with town and homeowners. Board members and others objected to the meeting timing (3 p.m. on a Friday afternoon) and Maria said she would go back to the town and try to replace it.

**Utility poles:** Utility companies are installing new poles for 5G. It’s an FCC regulated process. The town prefers that the boxes be “cohabitated” with existing lines on existing poles. Any new poles must go through the planning board. Some were installed without that. She said the town is working with Tilson, the subcontractor, which was told to remove the poles they have recently put up without planning board approval. 17 or so additional poles have been requested.

**Surf Club:** Maria said the town is still negotiating with the owners. The town is hoping to meet somewhere in the middle. She said she would not say more because negotiations were ongoing “but all parties are still engaged.”

A series of members (about 12) then questioned Council Member Maruca about the process and the town’s commitment to the Surf Club purchase:

Barbara Kaulius, Eisenhower Ave.: There are rumors that people on the mainland are opposed to the town buying the property (Maria denied that). She noted it is a “once in a lifetime” opportunity and that the difference between the state and the owners was probably only about \$1.5 million. She noted that the town took in \$100,000 more this year in beach badge revenue than last, and also \$600,000 in fines for homes awaiting redevelopment. She said that \$700,000 could be put toward the \$1.5 million gap. Maria said the town’s concern is not paying more than the appraisal figure, and not set a precedent from a governing body point of view.

Ellen Maurer, 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.: She had attended a meeting the night before with a group of neighbors who are concerned that their voices are not being heard on the Surf Club. “Once this property is gone, we’re not getting it back.” She noted that this is “for our children and grandchildren.” “We can’t let it go.”

Pat Klaslo: Pointed out that the town is spending money to buy public space elsewhere. She asked if the council is behind the Surf Club purchase. Maria said she believes there is support but it’s a matter of the price of that support.

2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue homeowner: “As our representative from Ortley Beach, I just hope you are 100% behind what the people of Ortley Beach want.”

A homeowner asked about the Surf Club appraisal. Council Member Maruca said it was \$10 million. The homeowner said compromise would leave \$2 million for the town to come up with. The town is getting a 10% return on its money with the sale of beach badges. Is there anything else in down that returns 10% on its money? Maria said it is about precedent.

A homeowner noted that there should be no concern about precedent, as this opportunity is not coming up again. With Ortley Beach paying more than 20% towards Toms River’s tax collection (Toni said it’s 27%), a purchase will only improve property values and help the township economically.

Roxane Graham, Washington Ave.: Belmar has done a beautiful job on its boardwalk. Why can't we put Ortley Beach on the map, instead of just being known as ground zero after Sandy? Get Ortley on the map. We love this area, we rebuilt Ortley Beach. The revenues and ratables from the big, new homes have to be double what they were before the storm. "A future for everyone to enjoy would be the Barcellona property open to everyone. As our representative I hold you accountable for all of us. You have to persuade the council to come forward on this." She noted the purchase will prove environmental protection that we won't have if there are condos there. "We are counting on you to bring us to a close." "We all took a hit in the storm; we need something to bring closure to Ortley Beach."

Chet Przybylko, Mariner Road: We understand you don't want to set a precedent. But there is no continuous beach/boardwalk. If condos are built there, we will never have it. There is very little ocean property left, so there would be no precedent in that regard. Third, TR is collecting a lot in taxes from us. This is what we need. The state is giving us free money. Let's take it. We can come up with the difference between taxes and beach revenues.

Mel Persi: We should all go to the council meeting Tuesday night. The government should do for people what people can't do for themselves.

Bob Steigelman: The rumor about the Surf Club is that the town is thinking it would get more in ratables from condo development. Maria said it is not about ratables.

Question: The town spent \$3 million on purchasing the Red Roof Inn. With the \$700,000 in increased badge sales and fines on undeveloped property, we should be close to the million, million and a half difference.

Maria urged members to go to the council meeting and express their opinions.

Barbara Kaulis: If we come, we should demand transparency: Who is in and who is out in terms of supporting a deal.

Board Member Toni Tomarazzo noted that the OBVTA board has been very active in pushing a deal forward, though not involved in setting or getting involved in the dollar amount. She noted there are 7 votes on the town council and we have only 1. "You own this," she told Council Member Maruca. She noted that we could get 3,000 people to march to the Surf Club property and appear on Eyewitness News. "Our hopes and dreams are squarely on your shoulders." She noted that the council majority is Council Member Maruca's party (Republican). Toni said that at the last council meeting, she and Anthony had spoken up: Anthony on public policy and Toni from a legal and fiscal perspective. "Ratables from condos will never exceed the value of increasing homeowner property values, with no added services)." She then noted that there are "lots of ways to win a negotiation" (ie, get to yes) and offered some suggestions.

Board Member Mike Wymbs pointed out the lack of recreational space in Ortley and the failure of the town and county to get access to the Ocean County Utility Authority former plant site in the middle of Ortley. "We need two things going: the beach area and a recreation area."

Board Member Mary Ann Wallis thanked members for speaking out and noted that Ortley continues to lag behind Lavallette in beach amenities, recreation, etc., and that it is going to take a concerted effort to get Toms River to catch up.

Council Member Maruca said she "heard you." There's a lot going on. Everyone is still engaged.

A member later in the meeting asked about the make-up of the town council: How does the departure of three members affect the timing of a vote on the property. Anthony said the plan is to have a deal done by year's end, before a new council is seated.

**On other matters:**

A homeowner, Mel Persi, noted that he has been in Ortley since 1948; had been given bad info by the town about expanding the apron for his driveway; wound up having the work halted; and now

has to go before the Zoning Board of Appeals at a cost of \$27,000 total – almost \$21,000 over his budget. He complained about the process and the costs.

Board Member Joe Cantalupo: Said he is having trouble walking up and down the dune walkways and that many seniors are requesting a hand rail. He noted that the Army Corps has control but asked the Council to get involved. Anthony said he had taken up the matter with Business Administrator Don Guardian and been told it could not be done because the fencing was not capable of supporting the weight. But he noted that some kind of system is needed, as well as a beach storage system.

Question about the dying beach grass. Maria was told there was grass planting this past week. Anthony noted that he told Don Guardian that we are willing to help with planting and maintaining the dunes after the Army Corps is no longer responsible.

**Sgt. Walter Bachonski:**

The Class 1 policing program ended. Class 2 officers are still employed but their primary role is to help in the schools. Class 3 (retired officers) are back in the schools.

Question about the parking lines on Ocean Blvd., where there had been confusion over parking (but parking is now restored): The yellow line is still there, but there will be no enforcement. He will make sure by the spring that the problem is addressed and correct lines are painted in.

The first Thursday of every month there is a Neighborhood Watch meeting at 7 p.m. The next one is Oct. 3.

On Monday, Sept. 30, 4 p.m., at Pizza Hut, the TRPD will host a Vest a Cop fund raiser to raise money for new vests, which have to be replaced every five years at a cost of \$1,500 each (\$243,000). OBVTA was asked to post donation info on its web site.

He said he has been contacted by people who have Medical Alert devices and live alone. He said the town's computer system allows documentation of name records and premises records and that such info could be noted and referenced in the event of an emergency. That info could even include lock box access codes, etc.

Sgt. Bachonski was again asked about changing the direction of traffic on Coolidge. He said there is no crash data showing the change posed a risk, and if the data is not there it is difficult to get a change.

He was again asked about cars parked at Jerry's Market blocking view of cars pulling out onto 35 North. He said cars must be 5 feet from intersections and he will address enforcement in the spring.

Golf carts? Have to be registered and can't be on, over or cross the road, ie no bay to beach. Can't go more than 25 mph.

Member reported that there is a pipe in a canal knocked loose by Sandy that is a hazard to boats. Maria Maruca made note of it and said she will contact the appropriate agency.

Request made for more bike racks. Council Member Maruca said they are on order; Anthony said every avenue will have two and Third Ave. will have more.

**October General Meeting Announcement (Anthony):**

There will be a special event at the October meeting: the Republican and Democratic candidates for mayor have agreed to come and answer questions. They will each make a presentation, then answer five prepared questions (no audience questions). Anthony solicited questions from members: email [obvta@ortleybeach.org](mailto:obvta@ortleybeach.org).

**Other items of interest:**

**Anthony:** Congressman Andy Kim will hold a town hall in Seaside Heights on Sept. 28 on flood insurance and flood mitigation. Can obtain a ticket at [Everbrite.com](http://Everbrite.com). There are three competing bills in Congress right now: A bad house bill and a slightly better Senate bill (both of which will raise premiums by 18 to 25%), and a house bill that will only raise rates by 9%. Comparability chart can be found on the NJOP web site. "As we fight for the Surf Club, we also have to fight for this."

**Joan:** Announced that tape under chairs indicated that members had either won a prize left at Beach Jam, or that they had won a Beach Jam beach towel.

Motion to Adjourn 11:20 a.m.